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Huang, Rong

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## **Chapter 35 Industry engagement with tourism and hospitality education: an examination of the students' perspective**

Rong Huang

*School of Tourism and Hospitality, Plymouth University, Plymouth, United Kingdom*

**Rong Huang** is an Associate Professor in Tourism Marketing at Plymouth University in the UK. She is a Senior Fellow of the UK's Higher Education Academy. Her research interests focus on aspects of the tourism phenomenon, for example tourism education, international student experience, internationalisation, and new academics. The subjects of her recent publications include ICT and tourism curriculum, the effective use of field trip in postgraduate tourism and hospitality education, the experience of new academics, and also international experience and graduate employability.

## **Chapter 35 Industry engagement with tourism and hospitality education: an examination of the students' perspective**

### **Introduction**

Solnet, Robinson & Cooper (2007) argue that tourism-related fields can be thought of as applied subject areas. This means that academics, students and curricula develop and benefit from close links with industry (Cooper & Westlake, 1998). Some authors (e.g. Cooper & Westlake, 1998; Busby, 2003, 2005; Solnet et al., 2007) criticise tourism linkage strategies in many education institutions, this is because they are often haphazard, lack vision, focus, commitment and resources. Due to the traditional importance of universities as research centres and sources of innovation, a review of relevant literature sources indicates that most studies have revolved around knowledge transfer and tourism innovation (e.g. Shaw & Williams, 2009; Baggio & Cooper, 2010, Wedenfeld, Williams & Butler, 2010). Few literature sources considered the impacts of such engagement on the enhancement of the teaching experience. Moreover, many papers were written from a university or industry perspective. As the key stakeholder of such engagement, the students' voice is missing in the research (Chapleo & Simms, 2010). Higher education institutions in the UK face challenges from many different directions, and the institutions' value to students and also wider society are regularly questioned (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009, 2011; Gannon & Maher, 2012). A lack of a clear understanding of the students' expectations and experiences in such relevant engagements generates serious problems when trying to integrate the tourism industry with tourism and hospitality education.

This chapter discusses different engagements between the tourism and hospitality industry, and the universities which run tourism and hospitality programmes; and summarises the benefits that students gain from those engagements. Problems and challenges faced by the students are also examined. The views of students on different types of university engagement with the tourism and hospitality industry at a tourism and hospitality school in Britain are discussed. The initial findings from class surveys with undergraduate students are presented.

## **Industry engagement in tourism and hospitality education**

The term university as observed by Georges Haddad (cited in Neave 2000: 29) finds its origin both in legal Latin “universitas”, meaning “community”, and in classical Latin “universus”, meaning “totality”. These days, the university’s communities may indeed be said to encompass a great number of constituencies as Jongbloed et al., (2008) argue that internally they include students and staff (the community of scholars), administration and management, while externally they include research communities, alumni, businesses, social movements, consumer organisations, governments and professional associations.

Frasquet, Calderon and Cervera (2012) summarise that universities operate in an environment characterised by fast technological progress, changes in funding systems, increased competition, and more demanding stakeholders. Several authors (e.g. Plewa, Quester and Baaken, 2005; Plewa and Quester, 2008; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009, 2011) argue that these changes force universities to address the basis of their competitiveness. Ensuring that programmes of study are relevant to industry and society is a prevalent part of the UK government agenda on university education.

Jongbloed, Enders and Salerno (2008) discuss that there are many forms of higher education–business interactions; of both a formal and informal nature. The dominant interaction channels are research publications, public meetings and conferences, research contracts, research staff acting as consultants, sharing of equipment, and students doing internships or on-the-job training. Due to the traditional importance of universities as research centres and sources of innovation, most studies have revolved around those issues, with examination of aspects such as the university’s impact on local development (Gunasekara 2006; Baggio & Cooper, 2010), knowledge transfer (Crespo & Dridi 2007; Weidenfeld, et al., 2010), the contribution to innovation (Hjalager, 2002; Abramo, G. D’Angelo, C. A. & Di Costa, 2011). A review of relevant literature indicates that few existing publications consider universities and industry relationships from the teaching and learning perspective although exceptions do exist such as a growing number of studies are published in relation to work-based learning (e.g. Cornford & Gunn, 1998; Boud & Solomon, 2001; Bailey, Hughes & Moore, 2003; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004; Nixon, Smith, Stafford & Camm, 2006) . Furthermore, limited consideration is given to the views of the students about such collaborations,

even though many authors (Solnet et al., 2007; Jongbloed et al., 2008; Chapleo & Simms, 2010; Gannon & Maher, 2012) agree that in higher education the students are the core stakeholders. Without knowledge of the students' interests and experiences regarding their engagement with the tourism industry during their studies, then efforts at improving this aspect of the experience for students may be unnecessarily disjointed.

Solnet et al., (2007:66) argue that "tourism-related fields such as hospitality, leisure, sport and events, are applied subject areas, demanding that academics, students and curricula develop, and benefit from, close links with industry". Airey and Johnson (1999) and Busby and Fiedel (2001) examine British tourism degrees, and highlight that a key feature of these degrees is the vocational nature of the programme. In reality, as Busby and Huang (2012:108) state "most undergraduate tourism degrees, in Britain, comprise at least one module which examines the nature of the tourism industry".

Thomas (2012) points out that successive British governments have introduced schemes designed to strengthen the articulation between universities and businesses. As Yusuf (2008) argues that the anticipation is that universities will, via such schemes, play a growing role in supporting future business development and innovation. Jauhari and Thomas (2013) argue that synergy between universities and industry can lead to enormous economic growth, and the vision of universities should encompass usable research and partnerships that help them to build competencies that matter to industry and to other professionals. There is consensus in the literature on the value of knowledge to successful innovation (Hjalager 2002; Cooper 2006). However Xiao (2006) and Xiao and Smith (2007) suggest that in tourism, knowledge transfer has been less marked than in other sectors of the economy. Furthermore, such schemes emphasise the traditional role of universities as research centres, and pay less attention to its role as centres for producing the industry's future workforce.

Industry is a primary stakeholder group for tourism and hospitality education institutions (Lewis, 2006; Solnet et al., 2007; Chapleo & Simms, 2010; Rawlinson & Dewhurst, 2013). As a result, tourism and hospitality education could be enhanced significantly if employers themselves were able to play a key role in the design and delivery of the tourism curricula (Dale & Robinson, 2001). Tribe (1999) delineates a number of groups that have an interest in, and may seek to exert their influence over, the tourism curriculum. He argues that stakeholders have different interests that can influence the framing of the tourism curriculum (Tribe, 1999). Dale and Robinson

(2001) go further and emphasise that to meet the evolving needs of stakeholders, tourism education should become more specialist in nature.

Researchers (e.g. Gursoy & Swanger, 2004, 2005; Lewis, 2006; Solnet et al., 2007; Kneale, 2009, Gannon & Maher, 2012) emphasise the importance of students having better representation in the tourism and hospitality industry for which they are being prepared, and, through their educational experience, the students need to develop impressions and contacts in the industry. Dale and Robinson (2001) argue that educators, often the conduit between industry and students, should focus on providing quality education that prepares students for their working life, and furnishes them with employment opportunities appropriate to their qualifications.

Many authors (e.g. Raelin 1995; Polonsky & Waller, 1999; Thomas & Busby, 2003; Vince, 2004; Hay, 2011) observe that over the years, business education has changed from a traditional classroom approach, to a more innovative, practical approach involving an element of “action” that addresses the needs of their key stakeholders, in particular academics, employers and students. Reg Revans pioneered one such approach ‘action learning’ in the UK in 1945 (Keys, 1994). The premise behind action learning is that students and managers will learn more effectively with, and from, other managers and teachers, when they are all engaged in the solution of actual problems in real work settings (Revans, 1971). A range of action oriented techniques (e. g. live cases/projects, business consultancy projects, industry collaborative projects) are reported by different academics (Polonsky & Waller, 1999; Thomas & Busby, 2003; Hay, 2011). Keys (1994) reports that action learning, and related approaches, are now being used by many companies, consultants and universities in the UK, United States, Sri Lanka, and Sweden.

Industry placements have long been a part of tourism and hospitality education (e.g. Busby, 2005; Busby & Gibson 2010; Aggett & Busby, 2011), with the majority of tourism-related programmes requiring a period of practical experience, this experience is normally essential for graduation. On those programmes where an internship occurs, there is clearly a link with industry (Tribe 1997; Cooper & Westlake 1998; Airey & Johnson 1999; Evans 2001; Busby, 2003; 2005). Indeed, Aggett and Busby (2011:107) argue that internships could “be the single most important link with industry”; as internships are an activity emphasised by Dearing (1997), Harvey, Moon, and Geall (1997) and Harvey, Locke, and Morey (2002) in their extensive reviews. Busby (2001:

35) explains, that an internship plus a degree equates to the “necessary base” for employment.

While these programmes come in different forms and guises (such as industrial experience, industrial placement, supervised work experience and internships), Solnet et al., (2007) recognise that such industrial placements tend to follow a similar pattern: the lengths of the programmes varies between institutions and programmes, but generally the format includes a compulsory section where students are exposed to working life in an industry segment, and essentially, the educator develops links with industry, communicates these to students, becomes involved (to varying degrees) in the selection process, perhaps visits the student while on placement and assesses the experience upon their return to study (Barron, 1996).

The contribution of alumni to the success of higher education institutions is a key feature in some countries, and Greenaway (2010) points out that UK institutions are encouraged to pursue these network ties as long-term benefactors and supporters of their work. The value of ‘real-world’ insights into the practicalities of managers’ roles, their organisations and industries and the impact on society is widely discussed in business and management areas, as well as in the hospitality and tourism higher education sectors (Robertson, 2008). For instance, Gannon and Maher (2012) report upon a specific Alumni Mentoring programme developed in Oxford Brookes University (UK) and explore the contribution of the programme to students, faculty and industrialists in developing future hospitality and tourism industry professionals.

The use of educational field trips has long been a major part of the education programmes of schools, colleges and universities. Lisowski & Disinger (1987) call this ‘learning in the environment’, and they trace, in relevant literature dating back to the 1930s, significant increases in the effective learning of techniques and subject knowledge. Novelli and Burns (2010) point out that field-based experiences gained specifically through field trips have a long tradition in disciplines such as geography, biology, anthropology, archaeology and literature, as well as more multidisciplinary fields of study, including tourism. Huang (2012) assesses the effectiveness of the use of experiential learning to integrate classroom lessons and field trips organised for postgraduate students studying tourism and hospitality management in Plymouth University (UK). The students were satisfied with their field trip experience, but, unless the lecturers provided a clear induction, the students were less clear about the links between field trips and classroom teaching (Huang, 2012).

## **Benefits and challenges perceived by students**

Different authors (e.g. Busby, 2003, 2005; Thomas & Busby, 2003; Myers & Jones, 2004; Little & Harvey, 2006; Ball, Collier, Mok, & Wilson, 2006; Bullock, Gould & Hejmadi, 2009; Easterly & Myers, 2009; Gannon & Maher, 2012; Rawlinson & Dewhurst, 2013) identify a range of benefits for using different types of industry engagement in tourism and hospitality education. Such benefits are addressed from different perspectives (e.g. for employers, for wider business community, for states, for universities, for students). The following section summarises those benefits, as reported by relevant authors, from the students' perspective.

The action-orientated approach has several advantages. Thomas and Busby (2003) report that the benefits of developing live projects, as implemented at Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, include the development and improvement of a range of skills (e.g. teamwork, communication skills, research skills and time management) which students need for working in industry as well as boosting the students' confidence. Such an approach also enhances the opportunities to use a range of skills (e.g. research, IT, communication and teamwork skills) and enriches the understanding of an organisation (Thomas & Busby, 2003; Vince, 2004; Hay, 2011).

Based on interviews with 82 students from several HEIs, Little and Harvey (2006) report that students are keen to participate in industrial placement because of benefits such as gaining an insight into a particular industry or type of work, seeing how theory applies in the workplace, supplementing learning with practical experience, and the belief that placement experience is more 'saleable' than other types of work experience in the graduate job market. An internship not only increases the ability of students to critically reflect on the tourism business (Tribe, 2001), it also provides an opportunity to observe others in a workplace setting, and may enhance the students' common sense (Gerber, 2001). According to Bullock, et al (2009:482), placements benefit students as they "have enhanced their understanding of their own life choices, enabled the acquisition of transferable skills and provided a tangible link between theory and application". Ball et al (2006) list nine different types of benefits of work placements can bring to students such as working in a setting in which to put theory into practice; developing an awareness of workplace culture; an appreciation of the fluidity



of a rapidly changing world of work; plus an opportunity to develop a range of personal attributes such as time management, self confidence and adaptability.

The benefits of an employer mentoring scheme are strongly allied to many of the recent initiatives in teaching and learning in business and management subjects. Several studies (e.g. D'Abate & Eddy, 2008; Robertson, 2008; Gannon & Maher, 2012) argue that such schemes, by providing connections to the practical world of business, as well as a glimpse behind the mystique of what managers actually do, can further extend and enhance the students' educational experience above and beyond the areas covered in their study programmes. Gannon and Maher (2012) argue that, from the evidence on mentoring and the briefly identified needs of industry and education, a mentoring programme for hospitality and tourism undergraduates has resonance.

Numerous research studies have documented significant increases in the participants' factual knowledge and conceptual understanding after participation in well-planned field trips (Myers & Jones, 2004). Field trips allow students to experience something that would not be possible inside the four walls of a classroom. They allow students to have the direct experience that can be the beginning of the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). Well planned field trips and experiential learning are great on their own, but together they provide an opportunity for students to experience class content first hand, learn from their experience in the field, and apply what they have learned (Easterly & Myers, 2009). Based on data collected as part of an innovative field-based education project on international tourism development and management with field-based work activities that was conducted in the Gambia, Novelli and Burns (2010) argue that such activities facilitate mutually beneficial exchanges between 'hosts and guests'.

Although there are pertinent benefits to be gained from the adoption of the stakeholder approach, and the development of close relationships with industry, such an approach raises a number of concerns with the practical application of the method. Based on analysing the findings from a stakeholder enquiry conducted in three Caribbean islands, Lewis (2006:23) raises three concerns in curriculum decision-making in the Caribbean that need to be considered as (1) 'stakeholder inclusion in decision-making is a lengthy, time-consuming, expensive exercise that can dissuade educators from embarking on the process'; (2) conflict would arise in addressing the 'common' interests from the various stakeholders in the tourism curriculum because of a limited tourism curriculum space; and (3) selecting individuals from within a complex

and diverse group presents a particular challenge for a stakeholder inclusive approach to tourism curriculum development.

Solnet et al., (2007:67) summarise the problems in managing industry engagement as “generation of a plethora of surface-level industry contacts; contact with industry personnel at relatively low levels of the organisation, such as at the human resource administration or operational level; staff responsible for these programmes are often not academics and lack the industry background to develop these relationships fully. For an academic there is no career advantage in a heavy time commitment to the management of this type of industry engagement; the quality of the student experience is often poor, with low-level tasks and little attempt to structure the experience on the part of industry.”

Many factors affect students who participate in industrial engagement (Morgan, 2006; Solnet et al., 2007; Busby & Gibson, 2010; Aggett & Busby, 2011). Morgan’s (2006) concludes that while students recognised the value of work experience, a number of factors influence their decision as to whether or not to undertake it, for example concerns relating to financial and personal costs, the level of support from the university, finding the right employer, uncertainty over career aspirations and the employer having high entry requirements. Ball et al., (2006) report that while many respondents were willing to pursue a placement, they alluded to a number of difficulties and barriers. These include the burden of finding a placement themselves, difficulties in ‘cold-calling’ employers (a lack of response or rejection dampened their resolve), a lack of awareness, unenthusiastic departmental tutors and self-reported idealistic expectations. After investigating the reasons that Tourism, Hospitality and Events students at one British university opt out of the placement year, Aggett and Busby (2011) emphasise that two key obstacles, a failure to understand the value of work experience and a lack of drive and determination, must be overcome in order to increase the numbers of students opting to undertake a work placement. The research done by Gannon and Maher (2012) discusses a range of challenges that affect students’ participation in an employer-mentoring scheme; these include knowing what to say to the mentor, pressure of academic work, difficulties in making contact, time management, a mismatch between mentor and mentee.

An analysis of relevant literature sources, shows that it is clear that students’ views in relation to different industry engagement have attracted attention from different researchers when they discuss different practice in their own institution or

region. However, most of those studies only consider one type of industry engagement in their research. Furthermore, very limited studies report to what extent students were involved in different engagements. As different stakeholders are normally involved in a range of industry engagement opportunities, the views of the students are needed in all relevant engagement opportunities, so as to generate a balanced understanding of provision and facilitation of industry engagement in the universities.

### **The students' perspectives of different opportunities for industry engagement**

In order to develop a picture of the students' views in relation to different types of industry engagement in tourism and hospitality education, a research project was proposed and undertaken with permission from the head of School of Tourism and Hospitality at a British university. Given its exploratory nature, a questionnaire survey of undergraduate students in the school was adopted. The questionnaire was composed of three sections to collect information in relation to demographical profile of the respondents, their interest and experience in industry engagement provided in the school, and also the perceived benefits that were gained from their experiences of different engagement and challenges which affected their participation of industry engagement opportunities. The questions were developed based a review of relevant literature sources (Busby, 2003, 2005; Gursoy and Swanger, 2004; Little & Harvey, 2004; Morgan, 2006; Solnet, et al., 2007; Busby & Gibson, 2010; Aggett & Busby, 2011; Thomas, 2012; Gannon & Mahor, 2012). The questionnaire survey was carried out between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 30<sup>th</sup> May 2013. In total 273 questionnaires were returned but only **255** questionnaires were usable. Therefore more than half of the total undergraduate population in the school participated in the survey.

#### ***Students' interests in industry engagement opportunities***

When the students were asked to what extent they are interested in taking part in the different industry engagement opportunities provided by the school, the results summarised in Table 1 (below), make it clear that the most popular industry engagement opportunities are 'Field trip (mean=4.29)', 'Internships (mean=3.84)', and 'External visit to relevant businesses (mean=3.83). The industry engagement opportunities that received the least interest from undergraduate students are,

‘Consultancy projects for businesses (mean=2.99)’, ‘Business games/competitions (mean=3.16)’, and ‘Volunteering in businesses (mean=3.17)’.

Table 1 Students’ interests in industry engagement opportunities

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Field trips	4.29	.948
Internships (short term work opportunities)	3.84	1.249
External visits to relevant businesses	3.83	1.053
Industrial placement (48 working weeks)	3.72	1.452
Honours’ projects associated with relevant businesses	3.66	1.107
Attending relevant industrial exhibitions/shows	3.44	1.106
Guest lecture from industry practitioners	3.29	1.039
Employer-mentoring programmes	3.28	1.090
Through work-based modules	3.27	1.191
Volunteering in businesses	3.17	1.164
Business games/competitions	3.16	1.258
Consultancy projects for businesses	2.99	1.131

Note: 1 means least interested and 5 means most interested.

The high agreement in ‘Field trips’ is consistent with findings reported by a range of research related to field trips/work (e.g. Smith, 2009; Novelli & Burns, 2010; Kaya, Demirkaya & Aydn, 2010). This finding also confirms Huang (2012) research of field trip experience of students at Plymouth University, namely that the students were very keen to participate in field trips so as to understand the tourism and hospitality industry in relation to future careers. The students’ positive personal experiences of different field trips organised by Plymouth University (e.g. visits to Roscoff, Bratislava, Vienna and Prague, Barcelona) and also strong financial support (the school funded most of the field trips) might be possible reasons for students’ strong enthusiasm for field trips. Strong interests in ‘Internships (short term work opportunities)’ might explain the decline in the numbers of students at HEIs in the UK that are opting to undertake a work placement (Bullock et al., 2009; Walker & Ferguson, 2009). A preference for internships, as opposed to industrial placement (48 working weeks), might be due to the difficulties/challenges that students face in securing a long-term paid placement, as well as a lack of drive and determination (Aggett & Busby, 2011). Support by students for ‘External visits to relevant businesses’ might be due to well organised external visits to relevant tourism and hospitality businesses such as Pennywell Farm, National Marine

Aquarium and also Kitley House Hotel. This finding is consistent with the students' positive evaluation of such activities which is shown in the relevant module evaluation implemented by the school.

From an analysis of results in Table 1(above), it is apparent that the students show strong interests in most opportunities for industry engagement except 'Consultancy projects for businesses'. The relatively low mean score for 'Consultancy projects for businesses' (m=2.99) agrees with findings from Thomas and Busby (2003) that although the students gain positive experience from such activities, the challenges of working with peer groups, the sheer quantity of work involved and their time management to achieve deadlines, mean the students are not very keen to participate. In the context of Plymouth University, this type of engagement opportunity is a key element of a final year module, and is set as a group assessment. A keenness to perform well in the final year, and also frustration and difficulties in dealing with group dynamics, mean the students show less enthusiasm in such engagement.

#### ***Student involvement in engagement tourism and hospitality industry***

Based on the students' positive answers for the different stages of each opportunity, Table 2 (below) summarises the extent of their involvement in different stages of various industrial engagement opportunities provided by the School.

Table 2: Student involvement in engaging with the tourism and hospitality industry

	<b>Setting up</b>	<b>Participation</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Industrial placement (48 working weeks)	86	53	26
Internships (short term work opportunities)	69	62	20
Through work-based learning modules	35	111	26
Consultancy projects for businesses	45	61	28
Volunteering in businesses	48	89	20
Employer-mentoring programmes	45	49	19
Guest lectures from industry practitioners	28	160	31
Attending relevant industrial exhibitions/shows	39	102	18
External visits to relevant businesses	32	120	29
Field trips	22	175	49
Business games/competitions (e.g. Flux)	37	77	15
Honour projects associated with relevant businesses	47	52	16

Following an analysis of their positive answers for each opportunity the following two conclusions can be made. Firstly, as far as the different stages of each opportunity is concerned, it is apparent that the students show the highest involvement in participation

in many types of industrial engagement, less involvement in the initial setting up, and even less involvement in the evaluation of those industrial engagement opportunities. Such findings support Frassetto et al (2012) argument that students tend to be passively involved in the different industrial engagement opportunities organised by their universities, and their voices are missing in the planning of different engagements. The finding is also consistent with Jongbloed et al (2008) discussion that students are not extensively involved in the evaluation of different industrial engagement. However exceptions do exist. The students seem to indicate more involvement in setting up of industrial placements or internships than other two stages. Secondly, the students show the highest involvement in taking part in field trips, guest lectures from industry practitioners and external visits to relevant businesses, but the lowest involvement in employer-mentoring programmes, honour's projects associated with relevant businesses and industrial placement. To some extent such findings reflect the availability, to the school, of different industrial engagement opportunities. But low involvement in industrial placement might be due to two key obstacles identified by Aggett and Busby (2011), i.e. practical constraints such as peer group pressure, and being forced by accommodation agencies to make early decisions about living arrangements.

### ***Perceived benefits and challenges of industry engagements***

Table 3 (below) reports the answers that students gave when they were asked to identify the different types of benefits which they gained from the experience of different industry engagement opportunities provided by the School.

Table 3: Perceived benefits from the experience of different industry engagements

Benefits	Mean	Std. Deviation
More industry knowledge	3.84	1.058
Better understanding industry opportunities	3.78	1.045
Greater self-awareness of own skills	3.55	1.186
more confidence about my career	3.54	1.132
Increased reflection on goals	3.33	1.129
Enhance my professional network	3.21	1.134
Confirmation of career path	3.20	1.207
External support for my career	3.18	1.149
Gaining tailored training certificates	3.08	1.303
Opportunity to see managers at work	3.06	1.167

Note: 1 means least beneficial and 5 means most beneficial.

It is clear that the most recognised benefits are 'More industry knowledge (mean=3.84)', 'Better understanding of industry opportunities (mean=3.78)', and 'Greater self-awareness of own skills (mean=3.55)'. The highest agreements in benefits 'More industry knowledge' and 'Better understanding of industry opportunities' are consistent with Gannon and Maher (2012) findings about the main benefits which the students gained from employer-mentoring programmes organised by Oxford Brookes University. The emphasis of self-awareness of own skills is in agreement with many authors (e.g. Thomas & Busby, 2003; Little & Harvey, 2004; Busby, 2005; Solnet et al., 2007; Busby & Gibson, 2011; Rawlinson & Dewhurst, 2013) i.e. industrial engagement opportunities provide a good chance for students to assess their own skills. However students indicate a relatively low agreement in benefits such as 'Opportunity to see managers at work (mean=3.06)', 'Gaining tailored training certificates (mean=3.08)', and 'External support for my career (mean=3.18)'. The low scores in these benefits support the arguments of several authors (e.g. Thomas & Busby, 2003; Solnet et al., 2007; Busby & Gibson, 2011; Rawlinson & Dewhurst, 2013) that problems in industry engagement, for example; conflicts of interests between different parties involved in such universities and industry engagement, and contact with industry personnel at relatively low levels of the organisation, mean that students could not fully realise the benefits of industry engagement.

The students were asked to what extent different challenges affected their participation in the industrial engagement opportunities that were provided by the school, Table 4 (below) summarises their responses. The most influential challenge perceived by the students is 'Pressure of academic work (mean =3.51)', this seems consistent with other authors (e.g. Chapleo & Simms, 2010; Aggett & Busby, 2011; Frasquet et al., 2012; Gannon & Maher, 2013) that pressure from other academic assessments is perceived as the biggest barrier to students participating in industry engagement. However as the mean scores of each challenge range from 1.91 to 3.51 shown in Table 4, this seems to indicate those challenges are not perceived to seriously impact upon the students' participation in the industry engagement opportunities. Governments are increasingly pressurising universities to provide opportunities for higher education students to acquire and develop the skills and attributes required by industry (Thomas & Busby, 2003). Therefore the results of this research could mean that initiatives that emphasise the value of different industry engagements, and continuous encouragement of the students to make a more determined approach to their

career development (Aggett & Busby, 2011), could improve the students' enthusiasm and abilities to overcome perceived challenges.

Table 4 Challenges affecting participation in industry engagement opportunities

Challenges	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pressure of academic work	3.51	1.242
Time management	3.35	1.129
Financial difficulties	3.06	1.263
Mismatch between opportunities and personal interests	3.06	1.054
Limited information available in relation to different opportunities	2.87	1.226
Own previous industrial experience	2.87	1.311
Pressure of peer group	2.70	1.143
Domestic and care duty	2.44	1.151
Immigration control	1.91	1.193

Note: 1 means least influential and 5 means most influential

## Conclusion

The range of collaborations between universities and the tourism and hospitality industry is both diverse and variable. This chapter has explored the contributions and challenges from different types of collaboration, and argues that such collaborations should not only be considered from the point of view of the benefits to industry of the universities' research abilities, but also from the point of view about the development of the industry's future workforce. Previous studies from different academics share their experience of different industry engagement opportunity in their institution or region. However given growing demand from our students, the role of students in each engagement need more active.

The results of the primary research undertaken in the School of Tourism and Hospitality shed lights on to a wide range of opportunities available to our tourism and hospitality students. When academics are designing the tourism and hospitality curriculum, the involvement of the students' interests and enthusiasms in different types of engagement will provide a sound basis for superior curriculum development. The students' relatively low involvement in setting up each engagement, and even less involvement in evaluating each engagement, call for academics to become more reflective practitioners, and thus create a more engaging approach so as to further empower students. The students' responses indicate that they are in agreement with



previous studies regarding a wide range of benefits they can gain from different industry engagement opportunity. However, although different researchers may perceive various challenges that affect student participation, the results of this research seem to suggest that the students themselves showed less concern to these matters.

Future research in this subject area could be explored by comparing results from different academic years at Plymouth University, or with other British universities which offer similar programmes. The perspectives of different stakeholders (e.g. industry, universities and students) involved in collaboration could be investigated, in order to get more balanced view of industry-universities relationships.

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